



Supreme Court of Illinois

September 12, 2022

JUSTICE MARY JANE THEIS SELECTED AS NEXT CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT

The Illinois Supreme Court announced today that Justice Mary Jane Theis will be its next Chief Justice. Justice Theis was selected by the Court to serve a three-year term commencing October 26, 2022. She succeeds Justice Anne M. Burke whose tenure as Chief Justice began in October of 2019.

An installation ceremony marking Justice Theis' selection as Chief Justice will be held at the Supreme Court Building in Springfield during the Court's November Term.

"I would like to thank my colleagues for giving me this opportunity to serve the people of Illinois as Chief Justice," Justice Theis said. "I would also like to congratulate Justice Burke for her successful term as Chief and her leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to working with the bench, bar and community at large to further the Court's mission of providing access to equal justice, ensuring judicial integrity and upholding the rule of law. Our goal continues to be increasing public trust and confidence in the courts."

Justice Theis will be the fourth woman to serve as Chief Justice following the late Justice Mary Ann McMorrow, Justice Rita B. Garman, and Justice Burke. She will be the 122nd Chief Justice in Illinois history.

Justice Theis was born in Chicago in 1949, the only child of Cook County Circuit Court Judge Kenneth R. Wendt and his wife, Eleanore. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University in 1971 and earned her *Juris Doctor* from the University of San Francisco School of Law in 1974.

Following an internship at the Marin County Public Defender's Office in California and her law school graduation, Theis returned to Chicago as an Assistant Public Defender in Cook County and served in that role until 1983. She began her judicial career in 1983 when she was selected as a Cook County associate judge. In 1988 she was elected as a circuit judge and assigned to both the Criminal and Chancery Divisions.

In 1993 Justice Theis was assigned to the First District Appellate Court and elected to the position in 1994. In 2010, the Supreme Court appointed her to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald. Justice Theis won election to a full term on the Supreme Court in 2012.

Justice Theis has chaired both the Committee on Judicial Education and the Committee on Judicial Conduct of the Illinois Judicial Conference, and was a member of the Supreme Court Rules Committee. She previously served as the Supreme Court liaison to the Illinois Judicial College.

She was President of the Illinois Judges Association (IJA), as well as President and founding member of the Illinois Judges Foundation. She was also President of the Appellate Lawyers Association and served on the Board of Governors of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) and the Board of Managers of the Chicago Bar Association (CBA) and is a member of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois (WBAI).

Justice Theis has taught at numerous judicial education programs, as well as conferences and seminars for the ISBA, CBA and at Loyola University School of Law. She has also lectured at Northwestern University School of Law, and the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law.

Justice Theis' honors include the American Constitution Society's Legal Legend Award, the CBA's Vanguard Award for recognizing persons who have made the law and legal profession more accessible to and reflective of the community at large, the IJA's Celebrating the Achievement of a Judicial Icon, the CBA's John Paul Stevens Award, the Juvenile Justice Initiative's Champion of Children's Rights Award, the WBAI's Esther Rothstein Award for her vision, contributions and assistance to women in the legal profession, and the Illinois Bar Foundation's Distinguished Service to Law and Society Award.

Justice Theis is married to John T. Theis and they have two children and seven grandchildren.

As Chief Justice, Justice Theis will serve as the chief administrative officer of the statewide judicial system with supervisory authority over the more than 900 judges in the state. Among other duties, the Chief Justice controls and schedules the Supreme Court's agenda for consideration in conference by the Court during its five formal terms each year, supervises all appointments to Supreme Court committees, serves as chairperson of the Executive Committee of the constitutionally-mandated Illinois Judicial Conference and presents the Court's annual budget request to the General Assembly.

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